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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000370

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TAGS: PGOV PINS PHSA EWWT MCAP NI
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: CAN A COAST GUARD HELP?

REF: A. LAGOS 240
1B. LAGOS 210
1C. LAGOS 192

Classified By: A/CG Richard Walsh for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) Summary: Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency's new Director General admits that Nigeria has severe shortfalls in maritime security and no institutional capacity to monitor, patrol or control Nigerian territorial waters. He believes his agency has a mandate to convert the moribund "Maritime Guard Command" into an embryonic Nigerian Coast Guard. Maritime professionals advocate the establishment of a coast guard, but many question whether the GON will tolerate an institution which could effectively inhibit revenue streams derived from illegal bunkering. End Summary.

Nigeria's Waters Unsafe

12. (C) The new Director General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Temisanren Omatseye, believes that Nigeria must establish a coast guard to address Nigeria's severe shortfalls in maritime security. Nigeria is second only to Somalia in terms of the number of armed sea robbery and piracy attacks reported to the International Maritime Bureau (Ref A). Omatseye claimed that 80 per cent of these attacks take place in the Lagos harbor and anchorage, while attacks off the Niger Delta and the over 300 attacks against fishing trawlers(Reftels), make up the remaining 20 per cent. This means that most threats to maritime security occur inside Nigerian territorial waters, in the gap between the navy's "blue water" domain and the marine police's "inland waterways" jurisdiction.

13. (C) Omatseye claimed that although many incidents in port were relatively harmless and did not warrant inclusion in "sea robbery" statistics, the absence of effective security in Nigerian territorial waters and ports spawns a wide spectrum of illegal activities from poaching to drug trafficking and illegal bunkering (i.e., illicit diversion of oil), which were not captured in the piracy statistics.

An Embryonic Coast Guard

14. (C) Omatseye admitted that no organization in Nigeria has the capacity to monitor much less interdict shipping in Nigerian waters. However, the Nigerian Navy and NIMASA signed a Memorandum of Understanding three years ago giving NIMASA responsibility for securing Nigerian waters up to 30 nautical miles off-shore. The Navy promised to second

officers to the "Maritime Guard Command," which was made directly subordinate to the NIMASA Director General. While the MOU is currently moribund because assets were never assigned, Omatseye believes it provides him with a mandate and enables him to turn the "Maritime Guard Command" into an embryonic coast guard. (Note: Within two months of assuming his position, Omatseye had already visited the United States for meetings with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Coast Guard seeking guidance and assistance. End Note.)

Maritime Domain Awareness

¶ 15. (C) Omatseye's primary goal in the short term is establishing "Maritime Domain Awareness" to track all seaborne traffic within Nigeria's 200-mile economic zone. He noted this capacity would also increase Nigeria's ability to respond to emergencies at sea. Omatseye further wants to require ships to give advance notice of their intention to enter Nigerian waters and provide information about their destination, cargo and crew. He added that if he had the ability to monitor shipping movements, he would after one year know a great deal more about the nature of piracy, armed sea robbery, smuggling, poaching and illegal bunkering in Nigerian waters, information which could be shared with the international community and used by any enforcement agency to counter such activities. At present, he stressed, those ships engaged in illegal oil bunkering or poaching marine resources are "invisible" to NIMASA, no matter how obvious they are to observers or from the air. Omatseye seeks United

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States assistance with respect to training and equipment in connection with this goal.

Problems of Jurisdiction and Political Will

¶ 16. (C) The maritime community widely supports the creation of a Nigerian Coast Guard. It was one of the primary demands voiced in a communique following a conference on maritime security on May 12. However, Captain Solomon Omotoso of the Nigerian Association of Master Mariners (NAMM) raised the issue of the legal basis for Omatseye's planned program of action, arguing that a MOU with the Navy was insufficient. NAMM would like to see legislation that would clearly delineate the responsibilities of the various bodies engaged in maritime security from the marine police, navy and Maritime Guard Command to the Presidential Implementing Committee on Maritime Safety and Security (charged with port security under the International Maritime Organization's International Ship and Port Security Code - ISPS).

¶ 17. (C) The Indigenous Shipowners Association lauded Omatseye's goals, but questioned whether he had the political backing necessary to be successful against powerful entrenched interests. According to ISAN's chairman Isaac Jolapamo, powerful circles "closely associated" with the current government, high-ranking members of the military and the governors of the Niger Delta states are the primary beneficiaries of illegal bunkering. An effective Maritime Domain Awareness program, much less a coast guard with real assets and capability, would effectively shut down the large-scale illegal bunkering activities taking place in Nigerian territorial waters.

¶ 18. (U) This cable has been coordinated with Embassy Abuja.
WALSH